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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a study of faculty recruitment and selection strategies used by self-reported learning-centered community colleges during the 1998-1999 academic year. The study examined six key principles of a learning college: (1) creates substantive change in learners; (2) engages students as partners in learning; (3) offers different learning options; (4) assists students through collaborative learning activities; (5) defines roles of instructors by needs of learners; and (6) documents improved learning. Eighteen learning-centered community colleges were selected for the study. Results indicated that learning-centered colleges: (1) include learning-centered questions in their interview processes; (2) ask candidates for examples of learning-centered practices and expectations; (3) incorporate learning into the college mission, vision, and core values; (4) are committed to professional development of staff to strengthen instructional skills; (5) use learning-centered language in position descriptions and advertisements; and (6) struggle to recruit minorities and fill high-tech positions, much like other community colleges. This report includes recommendations for future hiring practices, such as developing an assessment process that provides timely feedback to all applicants and establishing clear policies for recruitment. (Contains 29 references.) (MKF)

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Full-Time Faculty Recruitment and Selection Strategies Practiced by Learning-Centered Community Colleges

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FULL-TIME FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION STRATEGIES PRACTICED BY LEARNING-CENTERED COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By Sandra A. Fowler-Hill

This presentation focuses on a study of recruitment and selection strategies used during 1998-99 at community colleges that identified themselves as "learning-centered colleges."

Community colleges have been experiencing significant changes as we move into the new century. A shift from teaching to learning organizations has been in response to changes in the demographics of students, technology, and accountability. This has created a demand for new skills for faculty and administrators.

The emergence of learning organizations has begun to develop as a new direction to meet these challenges. According to Senge, a learning organization depends upon five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. Community colleges and other organizations that have become learning organizations demand that employees be life-long learners and collaborative team members.

O'Banion (1997) defined the basis of a learning college. He built upon the basic philosophy that the student is central in all activities within the scope of the educational enterprise. The six key principles of a learning college used as a frame of reference for this study included the following:

1. *The learning college creates substantive change in individual learners.*
2. *The learning college engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices.*
3. *The learning college creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.*
4. *The learning college assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.*
5. *The learning college defines roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.*
6. *The learning college and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners. (O'Banion, 1997, p. 47)*

Numerous researchers have stressed the importance of faculty in the development of the learning college (O'Banion, 1999; Barr and Tagg, 1999; Baker et. al. 1990; Dickinson, 1999; Lorenzo & LeCroy, 1994). The traditional approaches community colleges have used to recruit and select faculty based primarily upon credentials will not meet the

challenges of the future. Institutions will have to use new and different ways to fill the huge shortage of faculty vacancies created by faculty retirements, budget cutbacks, an enrollment boom and program changes (Miller, 1996; O'Banion, 1994; and Reed, 1995). The learning college has been leading the change in the community college system. By describing hiring practices at these colleges, it allows us to understand some solutions to the problem.

Selection of Subjects

Two international projects that promoted innovation and learning-centered practices at community colleges were identified for this study. The Learning College Project and the Learning-Centered Colloquium included a total of 18 community colleges that have been recognized as "learning-centered colleges." It was from these two groups that the colleges for the study were selected. Each college had already made a commitment to learning-centered practice and, therefore, invited to participate in this study. Each college was assigned an alpha code to protect confidentiality in the study.

Methodology

By using multiple methods an in-depth description of successful recruiting and selection practices was developed. A process of collecting data, consolidating, reviewing, analyzing, synthesizing, and writing was used to complete this study. As a result of the review of the literature, a framework for the synthesis and analysis of the data was developed: Planning, Recruitment, Selection, and Assessment. Each of these areas was explored through the review, analysis and synthesis of the data collected. Data was collected through a survey instrument, in-depth interviews with the chief instructional officer, and document analysis focusing on the planning, recruitment, selection, and assessment of those practices by the selected colleges.

Results

The results of this study (based upon the institutions studied) that directly or indirectly supported each of the six key principles of a learning college (O'Banion, 1997) through the faculty hiring process are as follows:

1. *The learning college creates substantive change in individual learners.*
    - The questions asked of candidates have now changed to include learning-centered practice and expectations.
    - Beginning with using consistent language in mission and values statements and in hiring, professional development, and evaluation, these colleges have been moving toward a more learning-centered institution.
    - The most important change has been in the type of questions asked of candidates.
    - The roles of the chief instructional and human resource offices have changed.

- A strong commitment to professional development is essential in providing readiness for change.
- Updating the hiring process appears to be a matter "in progress."

2. The learning college engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices.

- Academic leaders at learning-centered colleges emphasize the integrity of putting learning at the center of everything they do.
- These learning-centered colleges recognize that they need to look beyond credentials, include all the stakeholders in the process, and develop a pool of qualified candidates from the part-time faculty.
- Processes that were only driven by human resources policy and considered efficient in that they meet the legal requirements of the college have been abandoned or modified because they do not always lead to creating a welcoming environment for new faculty.

3. The learning college creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.

- The colleges recognize that they need to create a welcome environment for candidates.
- There is a strong commitment to professional development that creates change in the existing faculty, strengthens the skills of the part-time faculty, and provides support to the newly hired faculty.
- The common elements of learning-centered mission statements include a view of the community college as comprehensive, the need to provide universal access, excellence in teaching and learning, specific student outcomes, a commitment to life-long student learning, an overview of the types of programs offered, and a commitment to diversity and to meet the needs of community through public funding and partnerships.
- The colleges that provide a welcome environment for new faculty have created an open system that honors the skills of the past and the history of the college.
- All of the colleges use a briefing or group orientation to orient the selection committees.
- All the colleges continue to struggle to fill the high tech positions and lack effective ways to recruit minorities.
- Rural and isolated colleges continue to be challenged to recruit a large pool of candidates to choose from. The difficulty of recruiting diverse faculty is a problem shared by most of the colleges. In addition, they continue to struggle to fill high tech and high demand positions.

4. *The learning college assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.*

- Candidates have been asked to elaborate on their ability to be collaborative team players, but observable simulations that model

teamwork or collaboration have not been included in the process where these skills can be demonstrated or observed.

- Although more stakeholders have become involved in the hiring process, not all colleges agreed that all stakeholders were always involved.
- Everyone (screening committee, CIO and HR) is involved in creating a welcome environment for the candidates, so that they will say, "I want to work here."
- It is becoming common practice to create experiences that facilitate the new faculty in making a connection to the college.
- A composite of all the questions asked during the interview by the screening committees include the following common elements: student-centered skills, assessment of self, assessment of knowledge and skills in discipline, determining fit and potential contributions to the college, commitment to diversity, student assessment and curriculum development, ability to use technology in the classroom, team teaching/collaboration, teaching experience and instructional skills, commitment to stay up-to-date in field, innovation, oral and written communication, and community involvement.

5. *The learning college defines roles of faculty by the needs of the learners.*
   - The strategies used by the colleges studied include a planned and inclusive process that clearly describes the expectations for the new faculty.
   - Recruitment practices focus on the current part-time faculty pool, advertising through local papers, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other professional journals.
   - Trends have emerged in using language in position descriptions and advertisements that emphasize teaching in cross-disciplines, collaboration, keeping up in one's field, and using technology in the classroom.
   - Since the role of the faculty has changed, the abilities to deal effectively with students and relate to colleagues have become the most important roles. Learning colleges have been looking for new faculty who are learner-centered, practice teamwork and effective communication skills, and use technology to create learning experiences.
   - Clear expectations have been communicated to the applicant prior to the interview through the job announcement and position description.

6. *The learning college and its faculty succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learner.*
   - The selection committee is faculty driven. Through a clearly defined process each candidate is evaluated.
   - O'Banion's six principles of a learning-centered college (1997) have been integrated into the hiring process primarily through the questions asked in the interview and the teaching demonstration.
   - Some colleges have been practicing giving feedback to the candidates.

- The three most important means to find evidence of the candidate's skills in the selection process have been accomplished through the interview with the committee, teaching demonstration with the committee, and the "fit" of the applicant with the college and department.
- Colleges usually ask candidates to develop a teaching demonstration (ten minutes to one hour), solve a problem or scenario, and complete a writing assignment as part of the interview.

The results of this study produced a model that connects the mission and learning-centered values to the entire process.

Figure 1. Faculty Selection Model

A cycle begins that:
Honors the past history of the institution and the contributions of current full-time and part-time faculty
↓
Provides resources, technology, and professional development for all faculty
↓
Describes in the recruitment materials what the colleges really wants
↓
Creates an inclusive and collaborative process
↓
Implements a selection process that provides evidence of learning-centered skills
↓
Assesses the candidates, assesses the process and assesses the existing faculty
↓
Leads to creating new policies/procedures and additional professional development activities to support change
↓
This process is repeated with each hiring cycle.
MISSION AND VALUES

Recommendations for Future Hiring Actions

Based upon the results of this study, a "learner" can be viewed as the candidate, the faculty, the part-time faculty, the chief instructional officer and the human resource officer. Learning focus is a value, but not yet part of the culture at many of the colleges. Colleges have yet to fully integrate the learning-centered principles into their hiring processes. There continues to be considerable reliance upon the candidate's description of himself or herself in the interview. At the same time, it is clear that learning occurs at all levels in these community colleges.

Recommendation 1: Colleges need to explore other learning activities (simulations, team-teaching, structured group experiences) that demonstrate the observable ability of the candidate to communicate with students, collaborate with colleagues, and use technology.

Colleges may not always be asking the questions that will help them assess candidates for the emerging learning-centered environment.

Recommendation 2: Colleges that presently purport to be learning-centered should establish clear policies for recruitment that extend beyond the traditional methods to include "grow your own" programs, industry partnerships, internships, and developing part-time faculty.

Recommendation 3: Develop an assessment process that provides timely feedback to all applicants on strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendation 4: Implement an evaluation procedure that includes all the stakeholders (committee members, administrators, candidates, human resources and students) and uses all of the evaluation information produced to continually improve the hiring process.

Recommendation 5: Create a welcome and friendly environment for all candidates. This includes providing informative packets of materials prior to applying and providing a host for each finalist on-campus. Designate a point of contact for faculty candidates to be available for questions and who will make arrangements for the campus visit.

Recommendation 6: Provide an institute or weeklong workshop for all new faculty prior to fall quarter to become familiar with the campus and learning-centered philosophy.

Conclusion

O'Banion's (1997) Six Principles of a Learning-Centered College were being practiced in the faculty hiring process at each of the colleges studied on a continuum of *emerging* and *beginning* to use the language to *full integration into the institution* resulting in changed policies and procedures. Faculty hiring practices found in this study showed a commitment to hire faculty who "fit" in the learning-centered college. One participant concluded, "We find faculty who fit...we put the learner at the center of everything we do."

As new benchmarks for success are established by community colleges, improving the faculty and staff selection process will be one of many necessary steps in the development of a learning-centered environment. Understanding some of the hiring practices at these colleges may help us to envision some solutions that will result in putting the learner at the center of everything we do.

For a complete description and results of the research study refer to:
Fowler-Hill, S. (2001). Full-time Faculty Recruitment and Selection Strategies Practiced by Learning-centered Community Colleges. Unpublished Dissertation, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

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